

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces and surveys the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). Through a close reading of this foundational narrative, we will gain fresh insight into the multiple perspectives it offers on the nature of God, the destiny of humanity, and the history of salvation. By studying and applying the Documentary Hypothesis, the dominant modern theory concerning the formation of the Pentateuch, we will sharpen our ability to appreciate both the individual authorial voices that inhabit the Pentateuch as well as the theological effect of their combination. In so doing, we will reflect on the implications of this compositional paradigm for our understanding of the Church's teaching concerning the divine inspiration and inerrancy of Sacred Scripture.

**Learning Objectives:** Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to

- identify how any given Pentateuchal passage (such as one encountered in a lectionary or catechetical text) relates to the “big story” of which it forms a part
- understand the Documentary Hypothesis by directly examining the evidence on which it based
- ground your personal spiritual and theological formation in an attentive and responsible engagement with Sacred Scripture
- deepen your understanding of Catholic biblical hermeneutics by applying the teaching of *Dei Verbum* (Vatican II's Constitution on Divine Revelation) to particular features of the Pentateuch

**Coursework:** In addition to reading assigned texts and listening to online lectures, you are expected to complete the following graded coursework:

- **25% Forum Discussions (5 x 5%)**
- **15% Reflection Essay**
- **60% Content Exams (4 x 15%)**

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### MODULE 1: Orientation

- **Assigned Readings:**
  - Vatican II, *Dei Verbum*
  - Friedman, “Introduction” (pp. 1-6)
  - Friedman, “Collection of Evidence” (pp. 7-31)
- **Activity (Conference Call):** We will cover the overview of the course and the required activities of the students as well as interaction with the facilitator.

### MODULE 2: The Primeval History

- **Assigned Readings:**
  - Genesis 2-11 (J)
- **Activity (Forum Discussion):** Evaluate the overall development of humanity's relationship with YHWH: by the time we reach the end of Genesis 11, have relations improved, deteriorated or stayed the same?

### MODULE 3: The Story of Abram

- **Assigned Readings:**
  - Genesis 12-22 (JE)
- **Activity (Forum Discussion):** How does the story of Abram and Sarai reverse the pattern of human-divine relations in the primeval history?

### MODULE 4: The Children of Abraham

- **Assigned Readings:**
  - Genesis 24-50 (JE)
- **Activity (Content Exam):** You will complete a 30-question multiple choice exam on the Yahwist (J) and Elohist (E) portions of Genesis.

### MODULE 5: The Exodus

- **Assigned Readings:**
  - Exodus 1-18 (JE)
- **Activity (Conference Call):** We will reflect on the significance of the Exodus as the paradigm of salvation history. We will also address the theological and pastoral challenges posed by the violent nature of this story.

### MODULE 6: Sinai/Horeb

- **Assigned Readings:**
  - Exodus 19-34 (JE)
- **Activity (Forum Discussion):** How can the Covenant Code (Exodus 21-23) help us to understand and apply the Ten Commandments? Select one of the Ten Commandments and identify & discuss laws from the Covenant Code that clarify the intent and scope of that commandment.

### MODULE 7: In the Wilderness

- **Assigned Readings:**
  - Numbers 10-24 (JE)
- **Activity (Content Exam):** You will complete a 30-question multiple choice exam on the assigned Yahwist (J) and Elohist (E) portions of Exodus and Numbers.

### MODULE 8: Creation and Covenants

- **Assigned Readings:**
  - The Priestly Creation Story (Genesis 1:1-2:3)
  - The Noachic Covenant (Genesis 6-9)
  - The Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 17)
  - The Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 24, 31, 40)
  - Aaronid Authority (Numbers 16-18, 25)
- **Activity (Forum Discussion):** What can the threefold repetition of God's covenant-making with Abraham (Genesis 15, 17 and 22) teach us about the interconnectedness of the virtues of trust, obedience and fear of God?

### MODULE 9: The Tabernacle

- **Assigned Readings:**

- The guilt offering (Leviticus 5:14-26)
- The death of Aaron's sons (Leviticus 10)
- The food laws (Leviticus 11)
- The Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16)
- **Activity (Forum Discussion):** What can the sacrificial protocols of Leviticus 1 & 16 teach us about the relationship between atonement and forgiveness (or between divine justice and divine mercy)?

### **MODULE 10: The Holiness Code**

- **Assigned Readings:**
  - The disposition blood (Leviticus 17)
  - Sexual prohibitions (Leviticus 18)
  - Blasphemy (Leviticus 24)
  - The Jubilee (Leviticus 25)
- **Activity (Content Exam):** You will complete a 30-question multiple choice exam on the assigned Priestly (P & H) portions of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers.

### **MODULE 11: Remembering the Covenant**

- **Assigned Readings:**
  - Deuteronomy 5 (the Decalogue)
  - Deuteronomy 6 (the Shema)
  - Deuteronomy 7 (destruction of the Canaanites)
  - Deuteronomy 10-11, 30 (warnings & exhortations)
- **Activity (Conference Call):** We will review the major theological contributions of the Priestly and Deuteronomistic strands of the Pentateuch.

### **MODULE 12: Reimagining the Covenant**

- **Assigned Readings:**
  - Deuteronomy 12 (sacrifice)
  - Deuteronomy 16 (liturgical calendar)
  - Deuteronomy 17 (law and order)
  - Deuteronomy 18 (Levites and prophets)
- **Activity (Content Exam):** You will complete a 30-question multiple choice exam on the assigned portions of Deuteronomy.